

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

**Please amend the following claims:**

A1

1 1. (Amended) A method of providing a universal data analysis, measurement and  
2 control system for a variety of types of input data components comprising data sets, the  
3 method being implemented in a programmed computer comprising a processor, at least  
4 one data storage system, at least one input device and at least one output device, the  
5 method comprising the steps of:  
  
6 generating, by means of the programmed computer, at least one hierarchical  
7 index linked to each of the input data components, said at least one index being generated  
8 under pre-defined formatting rules and further including a description of each of the data  
9 sets, each said data set description including at least one quantified description of each  
10 data set;  
  
11 storing said at least one index in at least one of the data storage systems;  
  
12 instantiating said at least one index by means of the programmed computer;  
  
13 storing said instantiation of said at least one index in at least one of the data  
14 storage systems;  
  
15 comparing at least one of the data sets linked to at least one of said  
16 instantiated indexes to at least another of the data sets linked to at least another of said  
17 instantiated indexes by means of the programmed computer; and  
  
18 applying the output of said comparing to at least one of the output devices.

A2

1 3. (Amended) The method of Claim 2, wherein each said data set description further  
2 comprises:  
  
3 at least one quantified description of each data set; and]  
  
4 at least one name of each data set.

P3  
1 15. (Amended) A method of providing a standardized hierarchical index to a variety of  
2 types of input data components comprising data sets, the method being implemented in a  
3 programmed computer comprising a processor, at least one data storage system, at least  
4 one input device and at least one output device, the method comprising the steps of:

5 generating, by means of the programmed computer, at least one hierarchical  
6 index linked to each of the input data components, said at least one index generated under  
7 pre-defined format rules and further including a description of each of the data sets, said  
8 data set description including at least one quantified description of each data set;

9 storing said at least one index in at least one of the data storage systems;

10 instantiating said at least one index by means of the programmed computer;

11 and

12 storing said instantiation of said at least one index in at least one of the data  
13 storage systems.

P4  
1 17. (Amended) The method of Claim 16, wherein each said data set description further  
2 comprises[:

3 at least one quantified description of each data set; and]

4 at least one name of each data set.